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in the Second Bush Administration"
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I would like to thank Kurt Campbell, his colleagues at CSIS, and the Chosun Ilbo for the invitation to participate in this timely conference.

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of the U.S.-ROK alliance, a security relationship that has long served as a bedrock of stability for the region. Although our historical relationship with Korea dates back to the mid-19th century, it was the Cold War division of the peninsula, the subsequent Korean War, and the U.S.-led UN "police action" to thwart the communist invasion that caused Americans to feel such kinship with the Korean people. Surprisingly, the only two shooting wars relating to the communist/capitalist divide were in Asia -- Korea and Vietnam -- and both of these Cold War conflicts were unique in that they involved elements of civil war.

As this audience knows so well, the Korean War has never formally been concluded by treaty. In the most fundamental sense, the divisions in Korea remain to this day, with implications that extend far beyond the Peninsula, not only because of the enduring Stalinist character of the DPRK regime but also because of escalating strategic provocations by the North.

When speaking about history and North Korea, I am reminded of an anecdote related by T.R. Reid of the Washington Post. Some years back, Tom was visiting North Korea with a group of Japanese businessmen who were considering an investment in a port facility. Their host, a Deputy Foreign Minister who claimed to be a relative of Kim Il Sung, harangued his guests with accounts of the Great Leader's military exploits against the Japanese occupiers, culminating in the defeat of Imperial Japan in 1945. In response, Mr. Reid asked what one should make of the fact that during the war, while the Great Leader was mostly camped out in Moscow, the United States was waging battle after battle against Japanese forces in the Pacific. His North Korean host replied without the slightest hint of irony or doubt: There is no evidence whatsoever that the United States was involved in that conflict.

That breathtaking instance of revisionism captures the degree of insulation and indoctrination that persists within North Korea. North Koreans comprise the one national population to which the term "brainwashed" might accurately apply. This recognition is relevant both to current negotiations and to the eventual burdens of reunification. It also helps to explain North Korea's

uncanny resistance to the global changes provoked by the end of the Cold War. But while the North Korean regime has delayed the impact of those changes, whether by choice or force of circumstance, it cannot fully escape them.

THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR CHALLENGE

There are few parallels in history in which the U.S. has found itself with a less appealing menu of options than with North Korea. Pyongyang's ongoing nuclear program and its potential export of weapons of mass destruction have particularly profound implications for regional stability, the international nonproliferation regime, and terrorist threats to the United States.

From a global perspective, if one looks at flashpoints where major power military confrontation is conceivable, the three most vulnerable prospects have long been: Conflict between India and Pakistan; conflict between mainland China and Taiwan; and conflict involving North Korea that could draw in other regional powers. With regard to the first two circumstances, constructive dialogue between various parties has been (and is) underway to diminish the prospect of war. With regard to North Korea, the principle of dialogue itself is controversial and, to the degree that discussions have taken place, they have arguably sharpened rather than diminished tensions.

As the world understands, North Korea has endeavored to create an atmosphere of crisis with its decision to withdraw from the NPT safeguards regime, suspend participation in the six-party talks, and acknowledge that it has withdrawn fuel rods from its nuclear reactor in order to increase its "nuclear weapons arsenal." Pyongyang has dropped hints and some intelligence reportedly points to the prospect that the North may be preparing for a nuclear weapons test.

In all human affairs it is often difficult and usually presumptuous to apply motives to others. A possibility exists that North Korea's intentions are malign and that provocative rhetoric may be followed by provocative actions. On the other hand, a possibility also exists that North Korea's behavior is classic saber rattling to alter what they regard as unfavorable diplomatic dynamics, to increase their leverage, and to seek additional economic "incentives" prior to returning to the negotiating table.

There are few countries in the world where the political modus operandi is more impenetrable than North Korea. But it may be that the North is placing a rather cagey option on the table that relates to public assertions of nuclear capacity and pictorial displays of nuclear rods being transferred for reprocessing which could substitute for nuclear testing. In a kind of "have the whole cake" approach, North Korea might hope to be perceived as the ninth nuclear power without undergoing the political risk of testing a nuclear device. By agreeing not to test, it might hope to avoid certain sanctions and international isolation as it gropes with the possibility of

change modeled on Deng Xiaoping's China rather than Stalinist Russia – i.e., the introduction of market economics without regime change.

In any regard, there is little doubt that North Korea is well-practiced at deliberately creating tensions and exploiting them for its own benefit. Thus any party which enters negotiations with the aim of reducing surface tensions on the assumption that polite talk is a substitute for a policy shift cedes to North Korea a strategic advantage. To allow a dispute over process to supersede the substance of policy differences is foolish. We all are obligated to work to reduce tensions, but care must be taken to recognize that with regard to North Korea the goal is policy change, not the filling of a chair with a live body at a table with five other sentient diplomats.

Likewise, the U.S. should recognize that while the six-party framework makes eminently good sense, there is nothing theological about negotiating methodology. Just as we have bilateral discussions within a six-party framework, we can have informal or formal bilateral discussions in other frameworks.

Whatever the framework, any reasonable prospect of success for a negotiating process will require the active support of other parties, at least two of whom (South Korea and Japan) are also robust democracies. America must thus be mindful that there are public sensibilities in the region and, despite the invectives of the North, restrain from rhetorical excesses which no matter how valid may provide unnecessary fodder for distraction, delay, or evasion by North Korea. Realistic diplomacy demands an emphasis be placed on issues, rather than name calling of leaders or countries.

For example, the "axis of evil" description may have been as counterproductive in South Korea as it was in North Korea. When the appellative of "evil" is applied to countries instead of actions, it too easily offends whole populations, in this case Koreans on both sides of the 38th parallel. Thus, in this as in many other circumstances, hard-nosed realism demands attention to soft-power diplomacy.

There is simply no credible alternative to attentive engagement with the North. It is entirely conceivable that North Korea is determined to strengthen its military hand with a nuclear weapons capacity. But as untrustworthy as the regime is, it is nevertheless in our interest to use the next round of six-party talks, whenever it may occur, to offer a clearer vision of the advantages that may accrue to Pyongyang if it abandons its march toward nuclearization.

In this regard, the six-party talks as currently configured are a reasonable way to proceed, but given the lack of substantive progress, the question of whether supplementary or alternative approaches should be considered must be put on the table. At a minimum, we should be prepared to discuss all issues with the DPRK without precondition in the context of the six-party process.

The challenge for all of us is to develop a basis for rational discourse and rational compromise. Here it would appear self-evident that in exchange for North Korea's denuclearization and relaxation of controls on its own citizens, the U.S. should be prepared to take steps toward normalizing relations with North Korea and facilitating its participation in the broader international community. But the exact opposite could easily occur if North Korea continues to move increasingly in a nuclear direction. In that case, the question will become not only how other parties look at the issues, but how much they may be willing to press North Korea in convincing ways to change its policies.

In this regard it is often noted that China has been helpful in advancing a six-party framework for discussions. But there is a growing assessment in Washington that, as helpful as China has been, in a profound sense it has not been nearly helpful enough. As the nuclear showdown with North Korea grows more acute, there could well be an American backlash against China if the P.R.C. is perceived as refusing to modify its role as North Korea's indispensable benefactor. This combination of developments would have ironic elements insofar as China shares a powerful vested interest against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region. But in the absence of substantive progress on the North Korean front, ramifications could be large not only for U.S. policy on the Korean Peninsula, but for U.S.-China relations in general.

NORTH KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS

The goal of America with the North should be to craft a policy that speaks with clarity about the nature of the North Korea regime and applies measured firmness toward its leaders, but shows compassion toward the subjected populace. These philosophical precepts formed the basis for the bipartisan Congressional passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act late last year.

Innumerable North Koreans have faced some of the gravest rigors of the human condition – wrenching famine, a vast and brutal gulag, and, for refugees, exploitation, sexual trafficking, and forced repatriation by the Chinese. In response, the North Korean Human Rights Act was enacted to promote respect for human rights, transparency in the delivery of humanitarian aid, and protection for North Korean refugees.

The motivations behind the legislation are solely humanitarian. The law was not designed as a hidden strategy to provoke North Korean collapse, or to seek collateral advantage in ongoing negotiations. Put simply, while each of us as individuals may not be, the North Korean Human Rights Act is agnostic about regime change. But it is emphatic about behavior change. An additional aim of the Act is to increase humanitarian burden-sharing by the United States, particularly in terms of refugee assistance and resettlement. Because South Korean cooperation

will be important to our own efforts to assist North Koreans, the United States cannot afford misunderstandings regarding our intent, or our desire to be helpful in that regard.

On the geostrategic level, Washington can prudently agree with Seoul that there is no alternative preferable to a policy of "sunshine," provided that we all recognize the dark shadows cast by the North Korean dictatorship over populations both within and beyond its borders. After all, the North Korean government funds itself through the sale of military hardware, counterfeit currency, addictive drugs and the continuous effort to blackmail various nation-states. It is not only a rogue state; it is a criminal one.

But while the North Korean regime may be criminal, it is not lunatic, as is sometimes claimed. To the contrary, from the vantage of his own perceived interests, Kim Jong Il is playing a poor hand remarkably well. His priorities may be perverse, but his brinkmanship bears some relation to those notional ends.

I make this observation to decouple the supposed dissonance between preserving peace and principled human rights advocacy sometimes asserted by friends overseas. Kim Jong Il is too intelligent and self-interested to provoke fundamental conflict simply because the international community begins speaking about the actual conditions facing the North Korean people. As such topics become a routine and unavoidable component of international dialogue with North Korea, the regime will surely find ways to work beyond its cultivated outrage, which in any event should not deter us from prudently speaking the truth.

It is no longer philosophically or morally plausible for any nation to remain silent in the face of the documented privations and depredations being suffered today by Koreans in the North. In this regard, the second North Korea resolution in as many years, recently adopted by the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva is quite welcome.

US-ROK ALLIANCE

America should be prepared at all times for sober dialogue with the North. We also have an obligation to redouble our efforts to define and reaffirm a mature, respectful, and value-based partnership with Seoul that is supportive of the Korean people's desire for national unification.

The modern economic and democratic development of South Korea is a profound achievement to which the United States has made an essential contribution, but for which the Korean people deserve the overwhelming credit. The people of South Korea are deservedly proud of the Republic of Korea's arrival as a global actor – economically, militarily, and culturally. The

United States not only welcomes those changes without reservation but we celebrate them together with the Korean people.

Perhaps uniquely in the world today, the United States is committed to a strong, independent, reunified Korea. America has sacrificed blood and treasure in defense of freedom for the people of South Korea, and we understand that freedom necessarily implies independence of judgment.

But in wanting to assert psychological independence, Seoul would be wise not to casually eschew alliance structures in the 21st Century, especially when those structures have proven so critical to developing South Korea's political and economic stability in the 20th Century. There may always be short-term political gain to any government's distancing itself from another government in the name of self-reliance. But whether this is wise long-term policy or a thoughtful relational approach in general is open to question. Alliances, after all, involve the profound self-interest of societies and are designed to precede and supersede particular administrations. Indeed, strong alliances do not infringe national sovereignty; they presuppose strengthening it in the most elemental sense.

These cautions hold parallel lessons for the United States. One of the issues of the last several years that has caught Washington off-balance is the growth in critical South Korean attitudes toward the United States. We should have been more cognizant that real or perceived expectations of gratitude for past acts sometimes lead to social friction. Gratitude too frequently implies indebtedness and embarrassment and, as it turns out, seldom survives between generations with the same vitality. On the other hand, umbrages, whether real or perceived, often do. With respect to both Koreas, there is an historical concern for big-power chauvinism, whether from its neighbors China, Russia and Japan, or even from across the Pacific. Ironically, attitudes about American policy may be more generous today among the youth of former enemies, Japan and Vietnam, than among those of historical allies, South Korea and France.

In this context, it must be admitted that the emergence of differing national security priorities, generational change of political leadership in the South, contrasting attitudinal judgments toward North Korea as well as other countries in the region, and rapid shifts in America's global defense posture have led some in both countries to question the future viability of our alliance. Indeed one self-styled foreign policy realist recently suggested that "the conclusion to be drawn is quite obvious. The congruence of strategic interest underpinning the US-ROK alliance has melted along with the Cold War."

I emphatically reject this view. While tensions do exist, as long as leaders in the Blue House and the White House are able to balance the immediacies of the present with attention to long-term national interests issues of concern can and should remain eminently manageable.

Here it is perhaps worth restating why the US-ROK alliance remains profoundly in America's national interest. In broad terms, of course, our two vibrant democracies remain tightly bound through a deep and long-standing security relationship, ongoing political and cultural affinities, extensive economic bonds, and extraordinary people-to-people ties, cemented in many instances by a common educational experience and led by the million-and-a-half strong Korean-American community here in the United States. It should be underscored that the United States is extraordinarily proud of its Korean population, which is the largest in the world outside of the Peninsula.

It should also be noted that despite substantial public controversy, the government of South Korea was one of the early contributors to the U.S.-led operations in Iraq and currently has 3,400 troops in country, making it the third-largest contributor of foreign forces in Iraq. Seoul has also committed several hundred million dollars in assistance to the reconstruction of Iraq. As I am often reminded by my constituents, while the American people are divided as to the wisdom of our Iraqi intervention, they are united in deep appreciation for the assistance the United States has received from others in this endeavor to bring stability and to help forge a new democracy.

More concretely, the US-ROK alliance helps deter North Korea and preserve a free and open society in the South; it reduces the prospect that other powers will once again compete for undue influence on the peninsula; and it lays the basis for regional economic and security cooperation.

American critics of the US-ROK alliance should perhaps ask themselves whether U.S. nonproliferation and counterterrorism policies in Northeast Asia would be more effectively advanced if our security relationship with Seoul were in tatters. Likewise, South Koreans who advocate a fully self-reliant national defense posture must ponder whether a traditionally conflict-prone Northeast Asia, in which great power interests have often clashed in the past, would be more stable and peaceful without U.S. security guarantees. Indeed, is it likely that any country other than the United States would be prepared to defend South Korea's strategic interests?

From a Congressional perspective, America's commitment to South Korea has to be steadfast and our alliance unquestioned as the unpredictable unification process with the North proceeds. The North must not be allowed to drive a wedge between the U.S. and South Korea. The United States must take the long view, and the tone of our public and private diplomacy must give voice to our inner conviction that, as a vibrant democracy committed to economic and personal freedoms, the Republic of Korea is a nation the dignity of which deserves our deepest respect.

If our policies are informed by that spirit, there is every reason to be confident that Washington and Seoul will succeed in forging a new strategic framework for the alliance, not only for the

purpose of managing a range of complex contingencies related to North Korea, but to cement a common democratic partnership well into the 21st Century.

REGIONAL DYNAMICS

United States policy towards the Peninsula is increasingly affected by regional dynamics outside of our immediate control. As was recently underscored in demonstrations on the streets of Shanghai and Seoul, the U.S. cannot afford to be unconcerned about the rapid rise of friction between several of the principal powers in the region.

For a variety of reasons, it would appear that great power rivalry is on the rise in Northeast Asia, with its attendant potential to create uncertainty and foster regional instability. Attentive American concern, continued engagement, and steady leadership are vital if peace and prosperity are to be preserved in this historic cockpit of geopolitical conflict.

In many cases, the causes of recent friction have little to do with the United States. They are more related to the past than to the present. Indeed, it is profound how history can be more controversial than current events. For example, while the Second World War and the expansionism that preceded it in Asia are past-tense phenomena for short-memoried Americans, the first half of the 20th century lives far more vibrantly in the hearts and souls of millions of Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese.

Indeed, Japan has unfortunately found itself at the center of many of these recent disputes. A surprising level of antagonism has surfaced in South Korea over historical issues including, most recently, competing territorial claims for a chain of islets that lie between the two countries. Likewise, Sino-Japanese relations have deteriorated, with the Chinese people reflecting anger at the possibility that Japan could become a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and the Japanese people becoming increasingly angry at Chinese attitudes toward the past as well as competitive approaches to the future. While the sources of these tensions are long-standing and multi-faceted, the current set of problems appears to have developed or reignited an intensity that should be deeply concerning to all parties.

Here it is impressive to reflect upon the fact that at every turn in the last century the world has underestimated the power of nationalism. Events of the last several months remind us how impressive, for good or ill, is that power, the desire of people to carve their own destiny, to make their own mistakes. Indeed, in this country sentiment against multilateral approaches and angst about international institutions is growing.

In this context, seldom has it been more important for individuals in public life to appeal to the highest rather than lowest instincts of the body politic. Whether the issues be domestic or international, contemporary or historical, the temptation to appeal to the darker side of human nature must be avoided. In Northeast Asia, in particular, the stakes are too high. The implicit duty of public officials is to inspire hope rather than to manipulate fear.

CONCLUSION

In a world where the health of nations is directly related to the temperance of statecraft, the fundamental basis for American engagement in international affairs demands reassessment. For a number of reasons principally related to the galvanizing attack on our shores on 9/11, the first Bush term was characterized by national security decisions that often flew in the face of world opinion. Even some of our closest allies became uncomfortable with the manner in which the Administration has exercised America's extraordinary primacy in world affairs, so much so that one can imagine a range of scenarios in which even our friends in Asia might resist future Washington initiatives. To forestall such an eventuality, this second Bush Administration will need to be more sensitive to the views of others; it also needs to inspire.

Good policy demands good timing, and the judgment call of the day on the Korean Peninsula is the question of time. Whose side is it on? With each passing month, North Korea increases its nuclear weapons capacities. As a consequence, the odds may have increased that Pyongyang could export nuclear weapons or fissile material to foreign governments, shadowy middlemen, or even terrorists. On the other hand, the history of the 20th century has shown that governments which lack democratic legitimacy and fail to give their people the opportunity for a decent life are vulnerable to rapid internal implosion. Military might is simply no substitute for societal attention to human concerns.

There are different judgment calls for all governments at all times. The truly strategic choices that have to be confronted in the region need to be made in Pyongyang. This does not mean that decisions and attitudinal approaches in Seoul are inconsequential, or that policy choices for Beijing, Tokyo, and Washington are not critical. But it bears continuous recollection that the party that threatens stability in Northeast Asia is North Korea. The other five parties to the six-party process must take care not to fault each other for the dilemmas created by Pyongyang's singular intransigence. This doesn't mean that there cannot be differences of judgment on approach, but the politics of misdirected blame can easily get out of hand, to the grave detriment of all parties.

In conclusion, permit me to speculate about what may be the most unlikely of possibilities. We should not underestimate – indeed we should publicly trumpet – the fact that Pyongyang has the power to effect historic changes that would dramatically benefit North Korea's stature in the

world and the welfare of its people. A credible change in strategic direction away from isolation, repression, and nuclearization would put the DPRK's international footing on a basis of amity and cooperation, with prosperity in close reach. One of our many tasks in the weeks ahead is to make that previously unthinkable possibility easier for the North Korean leadership to imagine.

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